

We don't usually put in special requests, but wondered what might be available for a potential drive trip one week, with good fuel economy, to cover some distance, and four-wheel drive for likely wintry weather. They were thoughtful to realize we also might like to arrive in something nice. Their answer? A 2023 Lexus UX 250h.

The UX is a subcompact, the smallest of seven crossovers and SUVs from Lexus (or 14 with drivetrain alternatives), built upon the same basic platform as the immensely successful newest Toyota Corolla. (In Europe and elsewhere, there is also an even smaller LBX.) The UX lineup for 2024 in the US runs from \$35,540 to \$44,370. The basic powertrain on all is a 181-horsepower 2.0-liter four-cylinder hybrid system, shifting via CVT.

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Four trim levels are all available as front-wheel- or all-wheel-drive (see chart, lower right). Though engine horsepower is moderate, overall power and performance are augmented on all via two electric motor-generators—one starter-generator that also assists engine speed, and one for drive wheel assist and regenerative braking. All-wheel drive versions, like ours, add a third one to drive the rear wheels only, adding stability control for enhanced cornering and traction as needed in various slick and/or dry performance conditions.

We had had a 2022 UX a year earlier, an at-the-time top trim 250h Luxury hybrid, but the lineup has changed. All are now 250h hybrids (as that and

this have both been), and instead of Luxury, as on the 2022, the top trim is now F SPORT Handling (as driven here), one of two F SPORT variants.

Hop in. The UX feels bigger inside than its subcompact category might suggest, though you can reach around the cabin easily. You could comfortably take a long drive with passengers, with plenty of legroom and headroom up front, even more headroom though less legroom in the rear. Instruments and controls provide a driver-centric experience, while materials and finishes are all generous, in line with the Lexus premium brands.

The F SPORT Handling trim is feature-rich, with Bi-LED headlamps, 8-speaker premium audio, Apple-Android-Alexa connectivity, four USB ports, op-

tional heads-up display, wireless charging, 10-way driver's seat with two-way lumbar, and much more. The sexy Circuit Red and black interior on our sample is both rich and sporty.

The Lexus UX has notable pep at the first touch of the pedal, showing off a system that performs beyond its raw numbers, generally holding its own even among the aggressive fellow travelers on our freeways (even reasonable high-torque electrics). Around town, it turns on a dime, its 34.2-foot turning circle a particularly notable treat.

In addition to normal, sport and eco, the UX has an EV mode, available in "certain conditions." Toyota-Lexus truly are masters of the hybrid powertrain. The UX starts up silently, runs smoothly and goes dead quiet at a light, as you'd expect from an auto start-stop, but here the EV mode does its wonders, using that power to come back to life

smoothly and immediately; you won't even notice when the engine itself kicks back in.

Though we ended up not driving it that couple of thousand miles to take full advantage of its 40ish-mpg fuel mileage, we had a great week of routine runs in the Lexus UX 250h F SPORT AWD.

There are two ways a shopper might arrive at the Lexus UX. One is to be a premium buyer, but curious about something smaller and more fuel-economical. The other is to be a small vehicle buyer who does not want to be constrained to low end flavor or features. The UX is a great solution, with no compromise for either—rather, it delivers the exact value-quality-content formula anyone would seek. No matter how you slice it, the Lexus UX offers plenty, point by point. By price or by specs, it is more than the sum of its parts. ■

GREAT FROM ANY ANGLE

SMALL CROSSOVER EFFICIENCY IN A HIGH-END BUILD

BY JOE SAGE



SPECIFICATIONS

ASSEMBLY	.....Miyawaka, Fukuoka, Japan
SEATING	.....five
BUILD	.....unitized body; alum doors, hood, front fenders; polymer-alum rear hatch
HYBRID DRIVE SYSTEM	.....series-parallel gasoline-electric hybrid w two drive motor-generators (plus a third MG)
ENGINE	.....2.0L inline-4, 16v DOHC EFI dir inj, VVT-iE VVT-i Atkinson cycle, alum block w steel liners, alum cylinder head
COMPRESSION RATIO	.....14.0:1
MOTOR-GENERATORS:	
MG1	.....generator, starter, engine speed
MG2	.....drives wheels, brake regen
MGR	.....drives rear wheels, stability control
TOTAL SYSTEM POWER	.....181 hp
TORQUE	.....not stated
TRANSMISSION	.....CVT
FINAL DRIVE RATIOS	.....(F/R) 3.605 / 10.487
0-TO-60 / TOP SPEED	.....8.4 sec / 110 mph
BATTERY PACK	.....180-cell Ni-MH (nickel-metal hybrid), 216V, 24 kW
DRIVETRAIN	.....(e-FOUR) AWD
DRIVE MODES	.....sport-normal-eco / EV Drive
SUSPENSION	.....F: MacPherson strut; R: double wishbone
STEERING	.....rack & pinion, column-mtd elec
BRAKES	.....F: 12.0 vented, R: 11.1 solid
WHEELS	.....18x7J 5-spoke alum alloy dark premium metallic w machine finish
TIRES	.....225/50RF18 all-season run-flats
LENGTH / WHEELBASE	.....176.97 / 103.94 in
GROUND CLEARANCE	.....not stated
TURNING CIRCLE	.....34.2 ft
HEADROOM (F/R)	.....w/moonrf 35.75 / 36.38 in
LEGROOM (F/R)	.....42.05 / 33.13 in
CARGO CAPACITY	.....(above deck) 17.1 cu.ft (+ below deck) 21.73 cu.ft
WEIGHT / DISTRIBUTION	.....3605 lb / F/R 57/43%
FUEL / CAPACITY	.....regular / 10.6 gal
MPG	.....41/38/39 (city/hwy/comb)
BASE PRICE (2023)	.....\$43,605
F SPORT HANDLING	.....18-in F Sport wheels, dark roof rails, moonroof, color keyed over-fenders, black roof, heated/vented F Sport front seats w memory, LED fog & cornering lamps, headlamp leveling, auto-dim (driver's side) & heated mirrors w memory, rain sensing wipers, alum scuff plates, adaptive variable suspension, active sound control.....incl
PREMIUM PAINT	.....595
HEADS-UP DISPLAY	.....900
WIRELESS CHARGER	.....75
INTUITIVE PARKING ASSIST	.....565
POWER REAR DOOR W KICK SENSOR	.....565
DESTINATION CHARGE	.....1150
TOTAL	.....\$47,440

LEXUS UX 250h LINEUP (2024)

	.....FWD	.....AWD
(base)	.....\$35,540	.....\$36,940
Premium	.....38,000	.....39,400
F SPORT Design	.....38,000	.....39,400
F SPORT Handling	.....42,970	.....44,370